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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017

TAGS: PTER PGOV NI KDEM

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN SSS ARRESTS ALLEGED TERRORIST OPERATIVES

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Nigeria's domestic intelligence agency the State Security Service (SSS) officially acknowledged the arrests of militants with suspected terrorist links who possessed "explosive-making devices," confirming an earlier leaked, though not entirely accurate, press report. The announcement came in advance of charges being filed as early as next week. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) SSS spokesman Ado Muazu said Islamic militants with alleged links to al-Qaida have been arrested in Kaduna, Kano and Yobe states in northern Nigeria and that "explosive-making devices were found." This Day newspaper published a photograph with three bags of fertilizer and a few sticks of dynamite, said to have been seized from the group. According to Mr. Muazu, "Investigations have revealed that the suspects have links with the al-Qaida network and the Nigerian Taliban." The Nigerian Taliban, who have no known connection to the Taliban in Afghanistan, is a group of extremists who launched attacks in late 2003 against police stations and government offices in predominantly Muslim northeastern Nigeria, which led to a security crackdown.

¶3. (SBU) A similar report in the October 31st edition of the same newspaper credited sources within the SSS as describing the arrest of two men in Kano suspected of being affiliated with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This earlier report suggested that post's September 6th warden message, which it termed a "terror alert by the US government" was the impetus for the dispatch of security agents into the field. It claimed that "American" and "Western" intelligence had determined that the suspects had trained at a camp in Algeria. Interrogations were said to be ongoing to determine their associates in Nigeria.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Nigerian press reports of links with "al-Qaida," generally refer to al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an insurgent group with ties to Algeria operating in the Sahel. The announcement occurred on the same day that Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Frazer met the

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Director-General of the SSS, Mr. Afas Gadzama. The Director General told the Deputy Secretary that those arrested in the roundups could be charged as early as next week. END COMMENT.

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